

Skills Development Scotland Backs Sport

✘ A partnership that aims to develop and improve sport and physical activity programmes in Scotland's universities is one of the latest organisations to benefit from financial support from Skills Development Scotland's Flexible Training Opportunities Fund.

Scottish Universities Sport (SUS) who are based at 48 Pleasance in Edinburgh, made use of the innovative programme to put a new employee, Fiona Mathie, through a two-day Sage accounting course.

SDS covered 50 per cent of the cost of the training, which, according to SUS executive officer Jacqui Stone, made all the difference.

She explains:

"We considered undertaking Fiona's training in-house as this would have been more cost effective, but when we found out about the Skills Development Scotland funding, it meant we could send her on a formal course.

"This has helped ensure Fiona gets the best, most up-to-date training, making her more competent in a shorter timescale. It also means that other staff haven't been tied up designing and delivering the training she requires.

"We place a high value on training staff with each employee agreeing how to spend their continuous professional development budget each year in conjunction with their line manager. This helps achieve our targets and makes best use of limited resources."

The Flexible Training Opportunities Fund is operated by Skills

Development Scotland (SDS) with support from the European Social Fund.

The fund aims to help Scottish organisations of up to 150 employees become more resilient and successful and covers 50 per cent of training costs up to a maximum of £5,000.

Funding can be used for such things as attaining industry recognised qualifications, workshops, masterclasses and management training, but does not extend to statutory training including health and safety.

Up to 10 employees can be included in the training. For example, a business can opt to put 10 employees on a course at £500 per participant, or alternatively, put one employee through 10 courses, or a number of variations in between.

Although applications to the fund must be made by no later than March 31 2011, training does not need to be completed until June 30 2011. Download the Flexible Training Opportunities Fund application form from www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk Or call 0800 783 6000 for further details.

The application process is very straightforward and a decision is usually made within five working days.

Jacqui added: "We found the application process very straightforward and had approval from SDS in a matter of days. We have also helped spread the word round sport governing bodies, so that they too can consider how the initiative can help fulfil their training objectives."

Photo by Cate Gillon